



HHS Circular C-048

HHS Employment First Policy

Policy Statement

The Health and Human Services Commission acknowledges the policy of the state, as set forth in Texas Government Code §531.02447, that earning a living wage through integrated, competitive employment in the general workforce is the priority and preferred outcome for working-age individuals with disabilities who receive public benefits. The health and human services (HHS) agencies will promote integrated, competitive employment of individuals with disabilities and affirm they are capable of meeting the same employment standards, responsibilities, and expectations as other working-age adults by incorporating the Employment First policy and guiding principles in to agency policies, procedures, and rules.

Background

S.B. 1226, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, requires HHS, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to jointly adopt and implement an Employment First policy in accordance with the state's policy above. The Employment First policies for TEA and TWC are included with this circular as Attachment 1 and Attachment 2, respectively.

Guiding Principles

In accordance with §531.02447(b), the guiding principles of HHS' employment first policy:

- affirm that an individual with a disability is able to meet the same employment standards as an individual who does not have a disability;
- ensure that all working-age individuals with disabilities, including young adults, are offered factual information regarding employment as an individual with a disability, including the relationship between an individual's earned income and the individual's public benefits;
- ensure that individuals with disabilities are given the opportunity to understand and explore options for education or training, including postsecondary, graduate, and postgraduate education, vocational or technical training, or other training, as pathways to employment;
- promote the availability and accessibility of individualized training designed to prepare an individual with a disability for the individual's preferred employment;
- promote partnerships with employers to overcome barriers to meeting workforce needs with the creative use of technology and innovation;



- ensure that the staff of public schools, vocational service programs, and community providers are trained and supported to assist in achieving the goal of integrated, competitive employment for all individuals with disabilities; and
- ensure that integrated, competitive employment, while being the priority and preferred outcome, is not required of an individual with a disability to secure or maintain public benefits for which the individual is otherwise eligible.

Inquiries

Inquiries regarding the content of this circular should be directed to April Young, Policy Analyst, Health and Human Services Commission, by telephone at (512) 424-6911 or by email at April.Young@hhsc.state.tx.us.